

DEAN DEBATE

Blair Bobier (12/24) leaves the impression that Howard Dean is almost as much of a sneaky warmonger as is the Bush. It's more than that and it is the truth. That's why I'm voting in the primary for Dennis Kucinich, a true peacemaker/man of compassion.

But it is also the truth that Dean agrees with most of us *EW* readers that the Bush Iraq war was a big mistake and that Bush's presidency has caused great harm to the U.S. and to the world. To hold one's nose and vote for Dean in November may be the only rational option decent people in the U.S. will have because of the U.S. electoral system train wreck caused by greed/corruption.

What we really need is a miracle to make Kucinich surge past Dean in the polls. Can money and effort buy electoral happiness? Possibly not because it is another Bush bull-shit new year.

*Bob Saxton
Eugene*

NEW AND IMPROVED

As we begin 2004, it occurs to me that we seek to reinvent a new and improved version of ourselves. Losing weight and quitting smoking are on an ever-expanding list. I would ask that we all strive to be better people and remember that what we expect and demand from others is no less meaningful than what we do. When you drive by those who are walking, be mindful that they are not an inconvenience, but are your brothers and sisters who want the same things you want. When you see a bus loading a disabled person, don't be impatient because you might be delayed three to five minutes. We are all part

of the same family.

Those of our society who are challenged need our compassion — not our disdain. To those who extend your heart, thank you many times squared.

Measure 30 is a damning response to the needs of our most vulnerable citizens. We must get past the notion that we've done all that we can do. Social services are for all and even though you may be secure, many are not. Talk to those who have head injuries with additional mental and physical challenges or others receiving assistance; I expect they would give all they "have" to be "normal."

We must not let our fear and neglect compound their plight. Apparently most of our taxpayers are not familiar with "pay me now or pay me later." To those who feel that they are being held hostage by the request, I ask, "Shouldn't the services that will be cut be available to YOU if and when they are needed?"

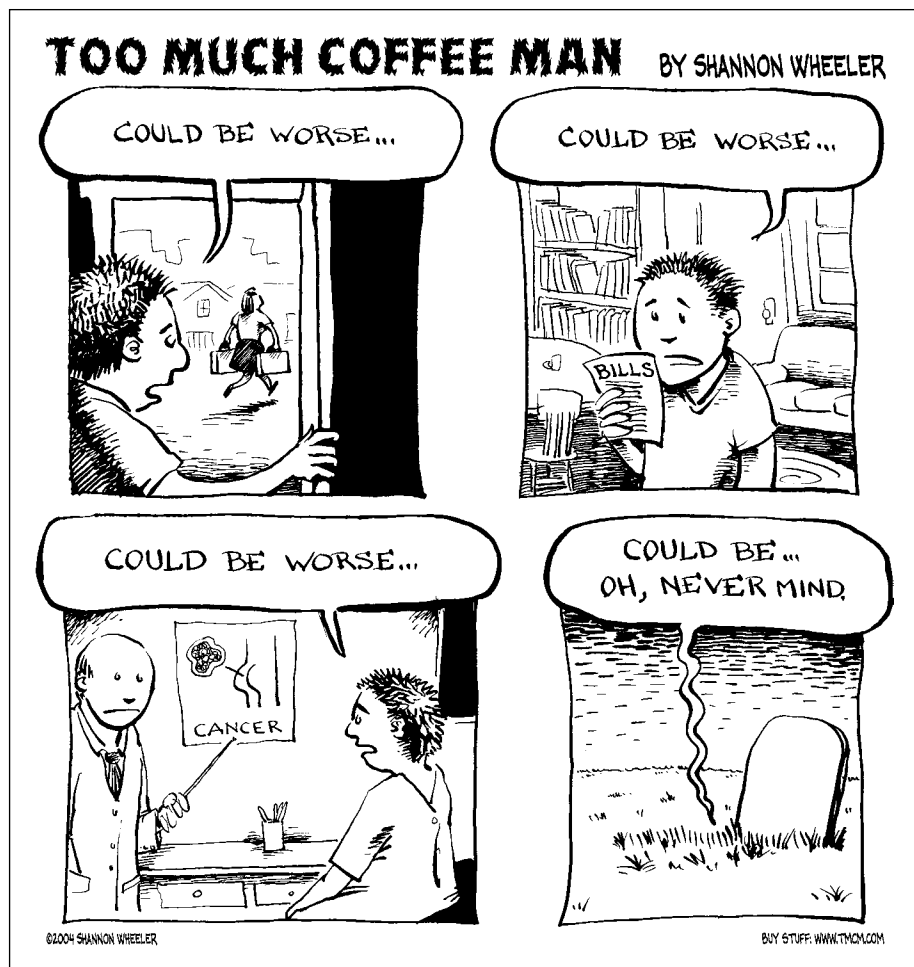
I urge all to vote with your hearts instead of your wallets. This is a new year and we all need to be new and improved.

*George G. Brooks
Eugene*

FREE SPEECH

After risking my trusty squeezebox's delicate health with the Anti-20303 carolers in the rain for an hour on Christmas Eve, I took the liberty and a break from tradition with an original piece entitled "Imagine" (loosely based on John Lennon's song of the same name). Many carolers enthusiastically joined in on the choruses before returning to the originally planned Christmas/holiday carols.

If you want to call that "factionalizing" go



right ahead, but I call it free speech, which was what this was all about. And by the way, the so-called factionalizing took place on the Wayne Morse Free Speech Plaza, not the Federal Plaza, as reported.

Sing on, people! And thanks to all who came out in defense of our constitutionally guaranteed right of Freedom of Assembly.

*Queen Accordionna
2000 S.L.U.G. Queen*

BAD BOY BOZIEVICH

By distinguishing himself as being "the first LCC board member in memory to publicly oppose funding support of LCC," Jay Bozievich has also distinguished himself as being perhaps the first principled board member. Only people of principle oppose an onerous law that benefits them or their special interest at the cost of others.

Thank you, Jay, for standing up for the

KUMBAYA DAMMIT BY DAN CAROL

Doing the New Math

These shameless freaks now want our pants.

So politically, it's my least favorite time of year. I'm not talking about all the hype over who has won the Democratic primaries before a single vote has been cast — that game comes every four years and sorry, no predictions here. We'll find out soon enough with Iowa and the New Hampshire primary coming up. No, I'm talking about the annual Kabuki Theater around the State of the Union.

You know the visual. President Bush speaks to the Congress in full assembly, "Hail to the Chief" plays, Vice President Dick Cheney sits in a chair behind Bush (Dan Quayle, we miss ya buddy!) and all through the show Democrats squirm and worry if they are clapping too little — or too much.

Ugly stuff. But that's just the parts we see.

Behind the scenes, we have a month of political jostling before and after the "SOTU" itself. The Democrats are working on their "pre-buttal" plan to try and anticipate and pre-spin what Bush says, both sides are lining up their ammunition for the budget fight that starts right after the speech, Bush is thinking about impressing us by going to Mars, and White House handlers are scouring the grassroots for the right citizen hero to sit next to Laura Bush.

Like I said, ugly stuff.

Last year, the main issue was the war. As in, whether we should have one in Iraq.

This year, I think the battle is less obvious but arguably as important. It's about the future and what investments we need to make. And we'd better get the math right. Otherwise, a 30-year, Republican strategy for destroying government's role in meaningful public investment (outside of space satellites and homeland security) will continue unabated.

This plays out both nationally and in states like Oregon.

Nationally, we need to deal with the aftermath of the Bush budget binge. After squandering a trillion dollars on tax cuts, buying off seniors with a dubious drug benefit that doesn't kick in until 2006, and putting America in red ink as far as green eyeshades can see, Bush is now saying we need to trim our belt and cut domestic programs.

Trim our belt? After stuffing their pockets with tax cuts, these shameless freaks now want our pants — and the shirts off our backs (or better yet, they want state government to deal with it all).



Can we call Bush a big spender without turning ourselves into budget hawks? That's a tight fit. Let's remember how much credit Clinton and the Democrats got for "being responsible" and balancing the budget mess left over by Reagan and his "I Love The 1980s" gang. The answer is zero. Nada. Zilch. So whether it's Howard Dean (he of 11 balanced budgets in Vermont) or someone else, the Democratic nominee needs to be careful before we raise our hands and do it all over again.

Well here's an idea. How about we don't play the Republicans' game until we stop stacking the deck against smart policy choices?

It doesn't have to be that way — not if we demand a serious look at the costs and benefits of public investment and make the case for *payback economics*.

We should play this game at the state level too on Measure 30 and so many other issues (Hello Governor K, are you home?)

Here's an example. This week, The Apollo Alliance (www.apolloalliance.org) is releasing an outside economic study showing how major league investments in good green jobs and energy independence would, in fact, pay for themselves, create over three million new jobs and over a trillion dollars in new economic activity. What's not to like?

Can we out-trump the Republicans on economics and demand a "policy payback analysis" to all federal or state investments? How would Bush's buddies do if their corporate welfare programs had to be benchmarked against, say, proven pre-kindergarten education investments for kids? Jesse Jackson had it about right years ago in talking about the importance of investing in the front side of life. Before we spend \$30,000 a year on a jail cell. Let's get the substantive cost-benefit analysis done to make that case on everything we are in favor of achieving in the next 30 years.

Republicans will say each idea costs too much. But once we count the benefits, they won't have a lot less to say while we will have much more to offer.

Here in Oregon, for example, we could propose a major bond program to make the state the leading exporter of green technology — or we can keep letting Bill Sizemore and Kevin Mannix set the bar for voters.

Whether it's the interstate highway system, the electronics industry or the Internet, there are endless examples of how public investment has catalyzed economic success.

This is no-brainer stuff. Voters can get this. So let's do the math.

Dan Carol is a Democratic political strategist and a founding partner of CTSG (www.ctsg.com), a progressive consulting firm based in Eugene and Washington, D.C.